

Message Text

SECRET

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67-S

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 SAM-01 SP-02 EB-07

IO-11 L-03 AF-06 INR-07 DODE-00 CIAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

INRE-00 /080 W

----- 005928

O R 232314Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8614

INFO AMEMBASSY MEXICO

AMEMBASSY LISBON

S E C R E T OTTAWA 0298

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EAIR, CU, AO, CA

SUBJECT: CUBAN MEDEVAC FLIGHTS THROUGH GANDER

REF: OTTAWA 280 (NOTAL)

1. EXTAFF WESTERN HEMISPHERE DIRECTOR GENERAL NUTT HAS INFORMED POLCOUNS THAT EXTAFF LEARNED ON JANUARY 19 OF TWO NON-SCHEDULED LANDINGS BY CUBANA AIRCRAFT AT GANDER JANUARY 13 AND 15. NUTT EXPLAINED THAT CUBANA MAKES REGULAR SCHEDULED STOPS AT GANDER ON FLIGHTS TO AND FROM PRAGUE AND LONDON AND THEREFORE CUBAN AIRCRAFT FAR FROM A RARETY AT GANDER. ALSO, AS SIGNATORY TO CHICAGO CONVENTION, CUBA HAS RIGHT TO MAKE UNSCHEDULED LANDINGS AT CANADIAN AIRPORTS FOR CIVILAIN PURPOSES.

2. HOWEVER, THIS RIGHT VIRTUALLY NEVER BEFORE EXERCISED BY CUBA AND OCCURRENCE OF TWO FLIGHTS IN QUICK SUCCESSION, WHEN REPORTED TO OTTAWA, RAISED GOC SUSPICIONS. NUTT CLAIMED HE NOT AWARE MEDICAL EVACUEES HAD ACTUALLY BEEN SEEN AND HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT CANADIAN AUTHORITIES AT GANDER HAD NOT EXERCISED GOC RIGHT UNDER CONVENTION TO CONFIRM CIVILIAN USE OF AIRCRAFT. NONETHELESS, ACTING ON ITS SUSPICIONS, EXTAFF CALLED IN CUBAN MABASSADOR JANUARY 21,

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REFERRED TO THE NON-SCHEDULED FLIGHTS TO GANDER, REMINDED

AMBASSADOR THAT SUCH FLIGHTS MUST BE CONFINED TO CIVILIAN PURPOSES, AND SOUGHT ASSURANCE FROM HIM THAT NO FLIGHTS FOR ANY OTHER PURPOSE WOULD BE MADE. WHILE NO ANSWER YET RECEIVED, EXTAFF CONFIDENT THAT CUBANS VALUE THEIR RELATIONS WITH CANADA TOO MUCH TO RISK CONSEQUENCES OF ANY REPITITION. ALSO, EXTAFF HAS CONFIRMATION THAT FLIGHTS CAME TO GANDER FROM AZORES, AND EXTAFF UNDERSTANDS THAT PORTUGAL HAS BROUGHT TO AN END CUBAN USE OF SANTA MARIA FOR FLIGHTS CONNECTED WITH ANGOLAN INTERVENTION.

3. NUTT INDICATED THAT PM TRUDEAU HAS BEEN FULLY BRIEFED ON TOPIC. HE UNAWARE WHETHER PM PLANS MENTION GANDER LANDINGS OR NOT. HE NOTED THAT PM'S BRIEFING PAPER FOR TALK WITH CASTRO INTRODUCES SUBJECT OF ANGOLA WITH EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE FROM TRUDEAU TO CASTRO THAT CUBAN GOVERNMENT HAS GIVEN UNDERTAKING THAT AIRCRAFT LEASED TO CUBA BY AIR CANADA WILL BE USED FOR CIVILIAN PURPOSES ONLY SINCE IT WOULD BE SERIOUS COMPLICATION FOR CUBAN-CANADIAN RELATIONS IF CUBA WERE IN ANY WAY TO INVOLVE CANADA IN ITS INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA. THIS IS THEN TO BE FOLLOWED BY STATEMENT OF CANADIAN OPPOSITION TO INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA OF ANY FOREIGN POWER.

4. UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES, APPROACH TO TRUDEAU PARTY SUGGESTED REFTEL WOULD APPEAR UNNECESSARY.
JOHNSON

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CIVIL AVIATION, MILITARY AIRCRAFT, MEDICAL EVACUATION, AIRPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: BoyleJA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976OTTAWA00298
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760027-0337
From: OTTAWA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760128/aaaaaxl.tel
Line Count: 86
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 OTTAWA 280
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: BoyleJA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <13 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <02 AUG 2004 by BoyleJA>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CUBAN MEDEVAC FLIGHTS THROUGH GANDER
TAGS: PFOR, EAIR, MILI, CU, AO, CA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006